The FRAILTY *and* INSTABILITY *of* HUMAN LIFE.

A duplicate

SERMON

Preach'd at

ROTTERDAM,

JANUARY 9th, 1763.

On Occasion of the

DEATH

OF

Mrs. HANNAH SOWDEN,

By THOMAS GREAVES.

ROTTERDAM:

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1763.

A

SERMON

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AT

PORTSMOUTH,

BY

THOMAS GRIEVES.

JAMES 4: 14.

For what is your Life? It is even a Vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away.

I Believe you will readily allow with me that the great Ends God has in view, in almoſt all the Diſpenſations of his Providence towards the Children of Men, in the preſent State of Exiſtence, and eſpecially in the more awful and afflictive part of them, are to awaken them out of that Spiritual Lethargy into which they are evidently fallen, to teach them the uſeful and Inſtructive Leſſons of Conſideration, Wisdom, and virtue; to fill them with a deep Senſe of the Uncertainty and vanity of all earthly Enjoyments, and to impreſs the great Obligations of their duty, in thoſe tender and agonizing Moments when the Paſſions are in full Exerciſe, and to write the forgotten and neglected Inſtructions of

Religion in the painful but often efficacious Characters of affliction and Sorrow. But among all the numerous evils and diſtreſſes that happen in human life, and which might give Occaſion for ſuch Reflections as theſe, none are ſo juſtly alarming as death, and the diſſolution of mortal friendships and alliances; eſpecially if the great King of Terrors, arrives ſuddenly, or at a very ſhort warning. On this account it has been the wiſe and decent Cuſtom in various Countries and Churches, to ſeize the Occaſion, and to improve ſo proper an Opportunity of Recommending the great intereſts of Piety, and of enforcing the duties of Life, by a well timed and affecting repreſentation of the Certainty, and importance of an unexpected and awful hereafter. Indeed, it muſt be freely confeſſed that funeral diſcourſes if this may with propriety be called one, have often been proſtituted to low and mean purpoſes, to Lavish unmerited Praiſes and Panegyricks on the dead and to Flatter and Cajole the Living. But with other deſigns than theſe permit me now to engage your attention

to improve the mournful Solemnity in which many of us yesterday bore a part, to some valuable purposes of virtue and Religion. And in order to it, let me recommend to your serious and devout meditation, the excellent Reflection of the Apostle James contained in the Text.

What is your Life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little Time and then vanisheth away.

I shall not make any Enquiry concerning the Author of this Epistle, whether it was wrote by James the Elder, the Son of Zebedee and Salome, and Brother of John (*a*) or James the less, the Son of Alphæus or Cleophas (*b*), the Brother of our Lord (*c*) or his Kinsman (*d*), according to the Flesh, as the appellation among the Jews often signified, which has furnished matter for much Controversy among learned men. Nor

(*a*) Mat. 4: 21. and 10: 2. (*b*) 10 Mat. 2: 3. 3 Mark. 17: 18 Luke 6: 14, 15. Acts. 1: 13 (*c*) Mat. 13: 55. 6 Mark. 3. Gal. 1: 19. (*d*) Gen. 12; 5. 12: 10. 13: 8. 29: 12. Levit. 10: 4.

Nor shall I say any thing about the design of it, as it has been so well explained by Doddridge, Benson, and others, but only observe, that in the 13th. verse of this Chapter, the Apostle severely reproves those to whom the Epistle is addressed, for presuming too much upon the present Life, neglecting a due regard to their own frailty, and their not maintaining a constant Sense of their dependance on Providence, with an entire reference of all human Events to it's disposal, in order to repress a sordid and excessive pursuit of wordly Good. Go to now, ye that say, to day or to morrow, we will go into such a City; (perhaps to Tyre, Sidon, Corinth, or Ephesus, and other Places, where the Jewish Converts were dispersed and traded) and continue there a year; and buy, and sell, and get gain.

He then suggests an excellent Reason to subdue so evil a principle, in the 14th. verse, whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow, and much less what a succession of the days, weeks, and months of a

whole year may produce. And that they might feel the Conviction deeper he asketh this very important queſtion, *For what is your Life?* on which all your Schemes of buſineſs, and the acquiſition of worldly Riches depend? *It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſheth away.*

In further diſcourſing on theſe words I ſhall purſue the following method.

I. Conſider the repreſentation here given us of Human Life.

II. The Improvement we ought to make of ſo intereſting a Truth.

I. Let us reflect on the ſhort but affecting view which is here preſented to us, of the frailty of man. *What is your Life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſheth away.*

Now this ſtriking ſimilitude may intimate to us the following particulars.

1. That this preſent ſtate of our Exiſtence has no principles fitting it for a long duration.

Thoſe of you who are ever ſo little acquainted with Natural Philoſophy, muſt know that vapours ariſing from the Earth, or any other Bodies are light appearances, without ſolidity or Coherence, which being exhaled and rarefyed by the Heat of the ſun, form thoſe thin and fleecy Clouds that float at a certain height in the atmosphere, and are driven about with the wind. Perhaps we ſee them one moment variegated with beautiful Colours, and large in extent, and the next they are entirely vanished out of our ſight.

Such is the Condition of Human Life; it ſpreads a mighty gay proſpect before our Eyes, but when we look, for it again no traces of it are to be found. *O Lord thou haſt made my days as an handbreath, and mine age is as nothing before thee; verily every man at his beſt ſtate is altogether vanity.* § The materials of which we are com-

§ Pſalm 39: 5.

compoſed are of a mutable Nature and the manner in which they are united, promiſe but a ſhort duration.

The Corporeal part of our Frame had it's origin from the duſt; our animal and vegetable ſupport ſpring from the ſame Quarter: *and at Length all fleſh ſhall perish together, and man ſhall turn unto duſt again.* (a)

It would be highly indiſcreet and wicked in me to reflect upon the great Father of the Univerſe, for producing ſo weak and imperfect a Creature, and ſo unfit for the offices and Time aſſigned him, as man appears to be: Nevertheleſs after all it muſt be freely confeſsed that our animal Frame is ſo Conſtituted in it ſelf, that without the violence of external accidents, and even free from the invaſion of extraordinary diſeaſes, we are able to weather but a ſmall Courſe of years ere the fine Channels of Nature ſhall be choaked up, or worn out, the organs of Senſation ſhall have loſt their Ca-

(a) Job 34: 15.

Capacity, and the Inſtruments of vigour and motion, namely the Nerves and muſcles, ſhall be enfeebled and unſtrung; and when but ſixty or ſeventy years are paſsed over our heads, except in ſome Caſes where the Conſtitution is uncommonly robuſt, and has been well preſerved by temperance and exerciſe, *No human power can ſave, no art can heal, The ſkill of the ableſt Phyſician and the tender care and ſollicitude of Friends are entirely in vain, man goes to his Long Home* §, the Body ſinks in death, and moulders into it's original duſt in the Grave, that cold and ſilent abode where all the hurry and buſtle of the Living is never once heard. —— But alaſs! one third part of mankind have not the happineſs to arrive at this mature age. For

2. Our Lives depend upon ſuch a multiplicity of concurring Circumſtances, that ſuch a Continuance is hardly to be expected.

If in the Courſe of Providence a man is favoured with a ſound and good Conſtitution of Body, and the ſtamina not im-

§ 12 Eccleſ. 5.

impregnated with any hereditary principles of diſtemper, (which let me tell you is a greater bleſſing than many are aware of) yet ſo many events muſt happen to preſerve and maintain it, that there are prodigious odds againſt his fulfilling the ſtated period.

For Inſtance, The tender and helpleſs Condition of infancy and Childhood, the giddy thoughtleſs ſtages of youth, and all the growing dangers of riper years, require ſo much watchfulneſs, ſo much Care, and ſuch conſtant application of skill and diligence; & the want of theſe at proper Seaſons is ſo neceſſarily fatal, and yet they are ſo frequently neglected, or in many ſituations not to be immediately obtained, that by far the major part of Mortals compleat not half of the utmoſt appointed Limits of Life.

To preſerve the Life and vigour of the animal faculties requires more attendance, and the reſtoration of them when impaired, more art and diſcernment than is generally imagined: ſo that where proper means are not

not uſed Life becomes a moſt precarious thing, and though at preſent, perhaps, it yields a flattering proſpect of ſtrength and duration, yet it's ſudden diſappearance ſhews it was but an unſubſtantial Form, a mere Pageant, the baſeleſs fabrick of a viſion as the Poet ſays, or as our text expreſſes it, *a vapour that ſoon vanisheth away.*

Human Life then, you ſee, is a poſſeſſion which requires much Care and aſſiduity to continue and ſupport it, —— But is this all? No. For to enhance its frailty,

I obſerve.

3. That it is evidently expoſed to ſuch an almoſt infinite variety of hazards and Evils, as to render its Continuance very ſurpriſing and wonderful.

The natural diſeaſes to which the wiſe Providence of God has rendered the human frame liable, are ſo many as ſcarce to be capable of enumeration.

There

There is not any part of our Nature, no not a Limb, a Joynt, a muſcle, or even a Nerve but is the ſeat of ſome disorder, and contributes its proportion of pain; ſo that thoſe perſons are become not the leaſt numerous, and neceſſary in Society, whoſe Sole ſtudy and employment it is to remove or alleviate the maladies we labour under; though the late ingenious and learned Dr. *Middleton* has attempted to degrade the dignity of their profeſſion by obſerving that Phyſicians among the antient Romans, were a ſet of mean, ſlavish, Wretches, of low Birth, and, of no reputation *(a)*, and Mr. *Rouſſeau*, in his New Syſtem of Education has endeavoured, but without ſufficient reaſon, to lash the whole Tribe into Contempt. Moreover, there are many other Circumſtances which threaten our feeble Natures with danger beſides theſe; For we are every where expoſed to the painful aſſaults of force and violence, or the anguish of uneaſy accidents; and ſo nice, and tender is the Structure of this our Frame that theſe not only create ſorrow and

(*a*) Vid: Miſcel: Works Quar: Edit: vol. the 4th. pag: 179.

and pain, but often cut short our Lives too: ſo true is the obſervation of Holy Job, *that man who is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble, He cometh forth like a Flower, and is cut down: he fleeth alſo as a ſhadow, and continueth not.* (a) Daily obſervation preſents us with numerous inſtances of the former, and home-felt experience alaſs! but too well evinces the latter, nay ſome times, ſo frequent are the returns of one ſort or another of theſe, that it may juſtly be ſaid in the midſt of life we are in death, and our Exiſtence which lies at the mercy of ſuch powerful Enemies is extremely precarious.

In ſuch a ſituation let me ask *what is your Life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſheth away.*

The propriety of this expreſſion will further appear from conſidering.

4. That in various Inſtances, Human Life is but for a moment. Without the full diſcoveries of the Chriſtian Religion we

(a) Job 14: 1, 2.

we should be utterly incapable of giving any rational account of ſo extraordinary a Phænomenon as the very short ſtay which millions of the human ſpecies are permitted to make in this earthly abode. Nay, after all it is ever matter of ſurprize that of the many thouſand Bloſſoms of Life which open and expand themſelves in the moſt fair and beautiful forms, they should ſo ſoon be blaſted by the Chilling hand of death, that ſo very few should arrive at maturity and yield any ſubſtantial Fruit. Yet how evident is this Truth? For to go no higher, what vaſt multitudes of Beings are introduced on this lower ſtage of Action who but barely make their appearance, and immediately go off again unnoticed? How many are there who fulfill the whole period of their exiſtence within the limits of a year, a month, or a day? nay I may ſay a ſingle hour. Who juſt peep into Life and directly leave it? O, what multitudes are brought down to the duſt of Death ere Reaſon, that Candle of the Lord is lighted up, thought begun or any of the known Ends of Life taken place? and whoſe Exit is by

no important Action diſtinguiſhed from its Entrance? But if by the Care and kindneſs of Providence men arrive at a few more years, yet how comparatively ſmall is the Number of thoſe who attain the meridian of Life? and how often is the tender ſpring of their Conſtitution by ſome melancholy cauſe or another broken to pieces and death ſucceeds? Juſt when the ſenſes are improving to ſtrength, when the mind is forming to reflection and thought, when Reaſon and Religion are by gentle degrees beginning to be felt, and exerciſed; when the fond hopes of tender Parents and Relatives are building a fair and flattering Structure of Joy, in the uſefulneſs and felicity of their offſpring; and the pleaſing proſpect riſes with their growing years, even then, in all the height of ſanguine expectation, when they are ſolacing themſelves with theſe agreeable images, and as it were anticipating their own happineſs in theirs. They are haſtily ſnatched away: the lovely appearance was but an exhalation, and it is gone, for ever gone, and the place thereof ſhall know it no more.

To Compleat the deſcription I add in the Fifth place.

5. That human Life may juſtly be repreſented as a vapour, if we conſider how ſurpriſing and ſudden our departure out of it often is.

About five or ſix weeks ago we diſcerned a thick, and general miſt, which overſpread the face of the Earth, hid all its proſpects from our view, and preſented only an uniform, and undiſtinguished Blot, inſtead, of the beautiful and various Creation, but lo! on a ſudden, by a ſmall Gale of wind, or by the piercing Rays of the Sun approaching to his meridian altitude it vanished almoſt in a moment. Many of us were like men that dreamed, we thought our ſelves deceived, by a viſion of the Fancy, and wondered how the groſs and mighty vapour, that enveloped us on every ſide was ſo ſoon diſperſed. Not leſs precarious is human Life. *It is a vapour, a miſt that appeareth for a little time and then vaniſheth away.*

The Invaſion of ſome diſeaſes to which the Human Body is ſubject, is ſo unexpected, the operation of them ſo quick and powerful, and the effect, is ſo immediate and fatal, that there is no warning given us of approaching diſſolution, and there is but a ſtep between us and death.

The ſlender thread of Life is ſnapped by ſome quick impulſe. Perhaps a blood veſſel finer than a ſingle hair breaks in the head, or from a variety of conſpiring Cauſes, the rupture of a larger one happens about the Heart, in the right or left Ventricle, the former of which undoubtedly occaſioned the ſudden death of the late venerable, and well Beloved George (*a*) the ſecond, King of Great Brittain and Ireland, and whoſe memory will be ever dear to Thouſands. Or ſuppoſe ſome minute particles of matter, either ſolid or fluid, should go the wrong way, and be lodged in a wrong place, they may prove in the hand of Providence as deſtructive as an Ocean of water, or a loaded Cannon, and may kill as

(*a*) Vid: Dr. *Nichols's* Letter to the Earl of Macclesfield Gent: Magaz: for November 1762. pag. 520.

as ſoon: ſo that but a few hours, or minutes ſeparate between the pleaſing hopes of many future years, and the entrance upon an awful Eternity; a Truth which if it wanted a variety of Examples for Confirmation, obſervation and hearſay might ſoon furniſh them out; But it is written for us in the ſtrongeſt Lines, and moſt affecting Characters over the Grave of our deceaſed Siſter, to whoſe remains many of us ſo lately paid our laſt office of reſpect; It is true, indeed, she did not yield to the ſudden and ſurprizing ſtroke of an hour, a day or even a week, but was carry'd off in about twelve or fourteen days by that cruel and well known diſeaſe the ſmall Pox, which has ſlain its thouſands and ten thouſands, and which, as she often told her Friends for many years before, it came to paſs, would probably prove fatal to her; and ſo it happened; But the infinite Wisdom of God ſaw it fit, and infinite Wisdom cannot err.

O Lord! what is man? How short is the term of his Exiſtence? How frail is the date of his Life? ſuffer the word of exhor-

tation. Be ye alſo ready (*a*) for in ſuch an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.

Juſtly then on all theſe accounts did the Apoſtle ſay, *what is your Life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away.*

Let us now agreeably to the method propoſed,

II. Make a ſuitable Improvement of thoſe ſolemn and intereſting Truths, we have been ſurveying.

Here we may obſerve.

(1) That this preſent appointment and Conſtitution of things is admirably well Calculated to cure the preſumption and folly to which we are ſubject. Now this preſumption is ſo powerful and general, that notwithſtanding it is daily deceived and disappointed, notwithſtanding the many fond and chimerical projects men form are de-

(*a*) 24 Matt. 44. Luke 12: 40.

defeated and cut short, yet in oppoſition to Reaſon, Religion, Experience, and the ill ſucceſs of others, we are apt to fall into the ſame deluſion, and to looſe our ſelves in the pleaſing dream of many future years of proſperity and pleaſure, to form viſionary Schemes, raſhly to preſume on to morrow, and foolishly to neglect the great and proper duties of to day.

Divine Providence foreſeeing that Natures formed like ours, would be expoſed to ſuch a ſnare; from a principle of perfect kindneſs, as well as by way of judicial punishment for Sin, made us liable to theſe neceſſary frailties and theſe ſudden Changes, that men might be ſtanding monuments to each other of the inſtability of Life, and the uncertainty of its Continuance, ſince the moſt careleſs and diſſipated cannot ſurely avoid theſe and ſuch like Reflections on the melancholy Events, and deaths that happen around them.

We alſo are mortal; This might have been our Lot; and with all our florid hopes,

and Schemes of future Joy, we might have fallen as eaſy a ſacrifice to the cruel hand of death; and all the mourning habits and funeral Solemnity which had place yeſterday, might have been paid to our Remains.

„ O vain Man! how ſupremely foolish „ and abſurd is it to truſt thy beſt hopes on „ ſuch a precarious foundation? O, may „ this inſtruction afforded us in the ſad Ex- „ perience of others beat down our pride „ and reſtrain our preſumptuous folly of „ boaſting in an uncertain to morrow. To morrow did I ſay? Perhaps to morrow with reſpect to me, may never come, and before this time to morrow I may be in Eternity.

O Eternity! Eternity! How pleaſing the thought to every good Chriſtian, and yet how awful? If the death of our Friends and Acquaintance, and, other melancholy Events that happen within the Circle of our obſervation, and knowledge, will not teach us Leſſons of true wisdom, I know of no other Teacher till Experience comes, and then the knowledge comes too late.

„ O,

„ O my God then teach me wisdom in
„ time, Leaſt I be miſerable to Eternity.

„ O, may I be fully inſtructed in the
„ things that belong to my everlaſting pea-
„ ce, before they are hid from mine Eyes.

(2) If human Life be only a vapour, then let it lead us to form a true eſtimate of all earthly Enjoyments.

During our abode in the preſent ſtate the acquiſition and uſe of temporal good things, ſo far as we lawfully may, is evidently a part of our duty, but weigh them not my Friends in the falſe and unequal Ballance of wordly Policy. In this view I muſt confeſs they ſeem of great moment, and prodigiously attractive; Rather Conſider them as the Conveniences and relishes of Life; and remember at the ſame time that life it ſelf is a vapour, and will ſoon vanish away.

Pray does this Compariſon of the ſacred Writer enhance their value? no, it vaſtly diminishes their worth. Alaſs! how fleeting are all the bleſſings of Life, both perſonal and relative?

Now the objects of a perſonal kind, on which the greateſt ſtreſs is laid, and about which there is moſt noiſe and Buſtle, are Strength, Beauty, Riches, Wisdom, Reputation, Power, and Genius. But what are all theſe? What is ſtrength but the exertion and force of the Bones and Muſcles? which is often weakened by waſting diſtempers or violent accidents, nay even crushed before the Moth. What is Beauty? what is a regular ſet of Features? what is a glowing dimpled cheek, or an Eye that ſparkles like a Brilliant, ſo as almoſt to dazzle Beholders? The one may ſoon grow pale and wrinkled by grief, ſickneſs or time, and the other will ere long be extinguished by death, if not obſcured before, and looſe all its mighty power to charm.

How often do riches that are almoſt idolized by the majority of men, and the ſtandard by which the merit of every thing elſe is meaſured, take to themſelves wings and fly away from their owners? How often does fire burn them? water drown them? or a pilfering Thief carry them away? ſo

that

that the moſt opulent may ſoon be reduced to the hard lot of pinching poverty, and inſtead of being very rich may become very poor. —— But if this should not be the unhappy Caſe yet I much queſtion if money does not make as many wants as it ſatisfies. Solomon ſays it anſwers all things (*a*), and in general ſo it does, But life and health, time and a good Conſcience, are matters too high for its purchaſe. Let not then the rich man Glory in his riches, but let him that Glorieth Glory in the Lord. (*b*) —— What is wisdom? is this great Talent more durable than other things? No for Job tells us, and Job well knew, that the Excellency of men goeth away, and men die even without wisdom. (*c*) Witneſs the immortal Duke of Marlborough, and the witty Dr. *Swift*, dean of St. *Patricks*, and many others that might be mentioned.

What is Fame, but avarice of air as one obſerves? The idle Breath of a giddy multitude, who to day cry out Hoſannah! Bleſſed

(*a*) Eccleſ. 10: 19. (*b*) Jerem. 9: 23, 24. (*c*) Job 4: 21.

Bleſſed art thou among men, and to morrow, ſay, away with him, away with him, crucify him, the Fellow is not fit to Live?

What is power? How often is he who is poſſeſſed of the greateſt share of it thrown down by a ſudden shock, and ſunk into the meaneſt, and moſt abject Condition? while another, perhaps, mounts the dangerous Pinnacle, and immediately is pushed of headlong to his own deſtruction, and that of his numerous dependents? To mention only one inſtance, I mean that great Child of Honour, as he has been called, Cardinal Wolſey, Chancellor, Prime Miniſter and Favourite to King *Henry* the 8th. into whoſe mouth when fallen from his dignity, and arreſted by the Earl of Northumberland for high Treaſon, our famous English Dramatick Poet Shakespear (*a*), puts this fine, and ever memorable Speech.

This is the State of Man: to day he puts forth the tender Leaves of hopes; to morrow

(*a*) Vid: his Works, Edinb: Edit: pag: 332, vol. the 5th.

row bloſſoms, and Bears his blushing honours thick upon him; The third day comes a Froſt, a killing Froſt, and when he thinks good eaſy man, full ſurely, his greatneſs is a-ripening, nips his shoot: and then he falls, as I do.

Farewell then a long farewell to all greatneſs.

What is Genius, but a ſuperior power, and elevated Faculties of mind? If it was equal to that of a Bacon, a Boyle, a Milton, a Locke, or a Newton, it is liable to decay, and may, as it often has done, end in downright Frenzy. — O, Ceaſe from man then, for all his accomplishments, and powers, both mental and Corporeal, are imperfect and fugitive.

Again. Are the relative Endearments of Life more ſtable? No. How often are the married Pair, inſtead of being of one Heart and one Soul, miſerably divided, ſo that the otherwiſe pleaſing yoke of wedlock becomes almoſt an inſupportable Burden to

them

them Both? How often do Children by their indiſcretion and wickedneſs disappoint the ſanguine hopes of their fond parents? and how frequently do we find our Friends, inſtead of being faithful, ſincere and honeſt, hypocritical, baſe and treacherous?

Alaſs! my Brethren, what is your Life in all theſe Reſpects? Is it not very vanity, and vexation of Spirit? and yet for all this, how apt are we to look upon theſe things through falſe opticks? through magnifying Glaſſes which make images widely different from the Truth? But the ſubject now under Conſideration affords us the only true Mirrour wherein to Behold them.

Do not underſtand me as if I meant to damp a relish for the innocent bleſſings, and Emoluments of Life; only be adviſed to put a wiſe and true value upon things; ſuffer not your ſelves to be deceived with falſe appearances, Conſider that Life it ſelf is a vapour, and that the various Enjoyments thereof have no principles of any greater firmneſs and ſolidity. *Rejoyce with*

mo-

moderation as though you rejoyced not, weep as though you wept not; Uſe the world as not abuſing it, for verily the fashion of the world paſſes away. §

(3) The Truth contained in the Text abundantly proves the importance and value of our Time.

If we would ſee the propriety and full force of this argument, we muſt reflect upon the greatneſs, and variety of our work, the short ſpace allotted for it; and the numberleſs temptations we are expoſed to, to neglect it.

The great buſineſs of Life is to improve our minds in the knowledge and Love of God, to act agreeably to the Relations we ſtand in towards him; to confide in his wisdom, power, and goodneſs; To obey his Laws; to reſign our ſelves to his appointments; to Cultivate fervent Gratitude, and unwearied praiſe, to realize an awful ſenſe of his preſence, and to propoſe his ac-

§ 1 Corinth: 7: 30, 31.

acceptance and favour as the grand Object of our purſuit, and to maintain every affection and action which is required of us; *To give honour to whom honour is due, fear to whom fear is due, Cuſtom to whom Cuſtom (a) is due*, and to do every thing, in all our ſocial and civil Connections, that may tend to promote the common utility and happineſs.

And in order to practice all theſe important duties, diligent application, perpetual ſolicitude, and vigilance are abſolutely neceſſary. But how ſhort is the period of time allotted? The longeſt Line of Life is not too much for purpoſes ſo weighty, and yet of the general race of men how few reach the utmoſt Limits, or indeed nearly approach them? and beſides this, how many are the avocations? how many the allurements thrown out to divert a ſteady and reſolute purſuit of theſe Ends? To rob us of our precious time, and the moments which when once paſſed, can never, never be recalled?

Can

(a) Rom: 13: 7.

Can a price then be put upon what is ſo difficult to gain? of which ſo ſmall a quantity is only diſpenſed? which is of infinite importance? and yet which every folly and every Care has but too much influence to deprive us of? O, No.

Be wiſe therefore, redeem the time, be rather prodigal of any thing than that, for time is short, your days are few and evil. Redeem the time, for an hour to a man unprepared, on the Confines of death, would, I doubt not, ſeem cheaply purchaſed with the whole world. —— O, Guard it as the hard-griping miſer does his wealth. Improve it as the cunning merchant does the lucky accidents and Hits that are thrown in his way: for it ſeldom happens that Golden opportunity, if once ſlighted, is offered twice. Employ every part of your exiſtence in the performance of ſome good duty and Service, leaſt more should be denied; *For what is your Life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſheth away.*

(4) Let

(4) Let this ſubject furnish us with an alarming call to a ſober and good Life.

The jolly and voluptuous Livers will ſay "come on; Let us live while we live. „ Let us give a looſe to our paſſions, and „ abandon our ſelves to pleaſure; for what „ is Life without her aid? what is Life „ without merriment, gaiety and frolick? a dull inſipid thing, not worth the having; But Reaſon and the Religion of Jeſus ſay —— "whilſt the precarious Scene of life „ Continues employ it in your Makers „ ſervice. Devote it to the practice of „ your Duty, and in doing good to ma- „ ny, for there is no pleaſure equal to „ that.

O, let us frequently reflect upon the ſhortneſs, and inſtability of Life, and when in the Courſe of Providence awful inſtances are given us of it, let us Conſider them as particulary addreſſed to us; and imagine that we hear, as it were, a voice ſounding aloud from the Coffin, and the Grave theſe melancholy Truths; *all Flesh*

is graſs and all the goodlineſs thereof is as the Flower of the Field (a), What is your Life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. Be up and doing, *for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the Grave (b),* whither you are haſtening, as faſt as the rapid wings of time can poſſibly carry you.

(5) Let us from hence be exhorted to guard againſt all unbecoming ſorrow either in point of duration or degree for the death, and departure of our Friends.

Perhaps ſome fond Husband has loſt his dear wife, to whom he was joined not by the Ties of Intereſt and filthy Lucre, but by the gentle, and generous, yet powerful Bands of unadulterated Love; ſo that he may be ready to ſay, in the bitterneſs of his Soul, and under the firſt impreſſions of ſorrow, as Wolſey did, Concerning Anne Boleyn, though in a different Senſe, "All

(a) Iſiah. 40: 6, 7. (b) Eccleſ. 9: 10.

„ All my Glories in that one Woman I have
„ loſt for ever. (*a*)

Well, the deſire of your Eyes, and the Joy of your heart is taken from you, is dead and gone, but remember, O, remember that God lives: *The Lord reigneth let the earth rejoyce.* (*b*) Conſider that the law and order of Nature by which she fell, is common, irreverſible, and univerſal, and had it ſo pleaſed the great Governour of the Univerſe, it might have been your Condition. However as the appointment is not partial you ought to acquieſce, for you received all your Comforts on parting terms, and held them by the ſame precarious Tenure. „ Hushed therefore
„ will every good Chriſtian ſay, be all ex-
„ ceſſive ſorrow. Far from me. O, my
„ God! far from me be the language of
„ murmuring and Complaint, for it is the
„ wiſe order of Providence, and not only
„ my duty but my intereſt to ſubmit.

„ If

(*a*) Shakespears Works Edinb: Edit: pag: 333. vol: the 5th.

(*b*) Pſalm 97: 1.

" If I conſider God as my Maker, I " cannot, nay I muſt not contend with " him: If as my Father, I have no reaſon " to diſtruſt him; ſo that I may be Confi- " dent, whatever he does, or ſuffers to " be done, is intended for my good, and " whatever happens, that I enterpret other- " wiſe, yet I can get nothing by repining; " nor ſave any thing by reſiſting (*a*), I " will ſay then from the very bottom of " my Soul, the will of the Lord be done. —— *He maketh ſore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole.*

The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; and bleſſed be the Name of the Lord. (*b*)

(6) If human life be no more than *a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſheth away*, we may fairly infer that there is another, and a happier ſtate of exiſtence, to which the preſent Scene is only introductory.

The

(*a*) Vid: Sr: Will: Temples Miſcellanea vol, II. pag. 97. *Oct. Edit. Edinb.* 1754.

(*b*) 1 Job 21. 5 Job 18.

The Juſtice and goodneſs of God. The Nature of the human Soul, which ſeems to be immortal in it ſelf, or by the will of its Maker; The offices and powers of Conſcience; the precariousneſs of Life; and the dreary Scene of Death; and above all, the full and poſitive declarations of holy writ, conſpire to prove beyond all diſpute, the truth of this point.

The Body we know from daily Experience, muſt die; But the Soul shall live for ever. For ever, did I ſay? yes for ever, and for ever, and though it changes its manner it shall never looſe the reality of its exiſtence, but poſſeſs abſolute perfection and felicity in a future ſtate.

Hence, in the laſt place I would recommend to you all, and eſpecially to you my Rev'd Brother, who are the more immediate mourner on this melancholy occaſion, the following Conſiderations, as the nobleſt ground of Conſolation and Joy.

If our departed Friends were perſons of a pious diſpoſition, and virtuous Conduct, and

and ſuch I verily Believe was the Caſe here, and what can I ſay more? Then how ſoon, or how ſudden ſoever they were ravished from us makes no difference with regard to their eternal felicity, nor ought it to our Comfort and ſatisfaction. *O, Bleſſed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they reſt from their Labours, and their works follow them* (*a*), and we shall ſoon follow after to the Port of Heaven, whither, like a Fleet of Mariners, to which good men have been often Compared, we are all bound. And though our pious Friends may outſail us, and make their paſſage ſooner than we, yet who knows but we may arrive with the next Fleet?

In a little time our Bodies shall return to duſt, we shall all vanish as a vapour, but our precious Souls if we are washed from our Sins in the Blood of Chriſt (*b*), and cloathed with the white robes of univerſal piety and virtue, but not elſe, shall aſcend to happier Regions, to be purifyed from all Corruption.

There

(*a*) Revel. 14: 13. (*b*) Revel. 1: 5.

There instead of being sunk in the precarious shape of an exhalation, that soon vanisheth away; we shall assume the brightest forms, put on eternal splendors, and make a Glorious, and unalterable appearance. There I doubt not but we shall find many of our old Friends and acquaintance: Husbands shall meet their Wives again, and Wives their Husbands; Parents their Children, and Children their Parents, never to be separated. There we shall be introduced into the General assembly and Church of the first born which are written in heaven, to an innumerable Company of Angels, who will open their ranks and make room for our reception; and to God the Judge of all, the antient of days, the Greatest, the grandest, the most venerable, and Lovely of all Beings, and to the Spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant. (a) O, what ineffable pleasure and transport will spring from hence? The warmest human Imagination at present, can form no adequate Idea of it.

O,

(a) Hebr. 12: 22, 23, 24.

O, Bleſſed State! O, Ravishing abode! when, o, when shall we go to the Father (*a*), and ſit down in his everlaſting Kingdom? (*b*)

A M E N.

(*a*) John 14: 28. (*b*) Luke 13: 29.